AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the specification as follows:

Page 1, first full paragraph:

A1

This application is related to co-pending U.S. Patent Application No. 10/060,345 ———
(attorney docket no. 23415-012), filed on February 01, 2002, and U.S. Patent Application No.
10/085,248——————(attorney docket no. 23415-013), filed on February 26, 2002, both of which
are assigned to the same assignee as that of the present invention and are incorporated herein by
this reference.

Page 6, the second full paragraph:

A2

In one embodiment, system 102 presents a practical exercise to user 101 by displaying
information (e.g., text, graphics, sound, and/or other information) to the user that describes the
practical exercise's scenario and tasks that user 101 must perform to successfully complete the
exercise. In one embodiment, system 102 evaluates how well user 101 completed the practical
exercise by examining the state into which the user put the virtual machines and comparing the
state of the virtual machines to a benchmark state. In this way, system 102 determines whether
user 101 completed the required tasks and whether user 101 modified a virtual machine in a way
that was not required.

Page 7, the last paragraph, bridging onto page 8:

A3

In step 212, ITSE 114 launches the one or more virtual machines determined in step 210.
The virtual machines are pre-configured so that they will have the necessary software, utilities,
etc. and provide the necessary functions for user 101 to complete the tasks required by the
practical exercise. Advantageously, a suspended state file may be created for each of the virtual
machines so that, after a virtual machine is launched, the virtual machine is placed automatically
into a particular state defined by the virtual machine's suspended state file. In this way, user 101

Cont A3

can be presented with a well controlled testing environment. For example, in a practical exercise that describes a scenario in which a computer is unable to access the Internet and the task required of user 101 is to fix this problem, then a suspended state file associated with one or the exercise's virtual machines may be pre-configured so that when the virtual machine is presented to user 101 the virtual machine's IP routing table has incorrect information. In this way, the virtual machine emulates the "problem" described in the scenario, and user 101's IT sills skills are evaluated by seeing if user 101 can modify the virtual machine's routing table to fix the problem.

Page 8, first full paragraph:

A4

In step 214, ITSE 114 displays to user 101 information that is associated with the practical exercise. This information may be retrieved from database 170 where it is stored and associated with the practical exercise. The information describes the practical exercise's scenario and the tasks that user 101 must perform to successfully complete the exercise. At this point, user 101 performs the tasks, which typically require user 101 to delete, create, and/or modify one or more particular files stored within on one or more of the virtual machines' disk image files (i.e., configure a piece of software installed on a virtual machine or a hardware device "connected" to a virtual machine).

Page 10, third full paragraph:

A5

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of a one possible embodiment of ITSE 114. This embodiment is shown for the purpose of illustration, not limitation. One skilled in the art will recognize that there are a wide variety of ways to implement skills evaluator 114. As shown if in FIG. 3, ITSE 114 includes a conventional test driver 302 and a practical skills testing module (PSTM) 304, which may include one or more software modules. Test driver 302 may be obtained from NCS Pearson, Inc., which provides the VUE™ computer-based test delivery service, or from Prometric, Inc. of Baltimore, MD. Other Test drivers may also be used.